

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

The fact that the southern part of Iranian Kurdistan was in the British zone added special flavor to the Kurdish question. Through their consulate in Kermanshah the British maintained constant contact with the tribes. A number of experienced agents served British interests in this area. Colonel Fletcher and Major Lyons acted as political officers. Major Oakshot, manager of the Sanandaj branch of the Imperial Bank of Iran, was also reputed to apply his knowledge of local conditions to further official British policies in this area. The success of British and Soviet policies in their respective zones could, to some extent, be measured by the fact that Sadra Qazi, deputy from Mahabad in the Majlis and brother of Mohammed Qazi, revealed a pro-Soviet orientation whereas three deputies from the British zone, Abbas Gobadian, Salar Sanandaji, and Dr. Moiafen, were definitely pro-British and belonged to the block supporting Seyyid Zia ed-Din in the parliament. It was asserted that the relative ease with which the British forces marched into Iran along the Qasr-i-Shirin-Kermanshah line in 1941, and the rapid disintegration of Iranian resistance, were in no small part due to the preliminary work of British agents among the Kurds.

The British had good reasons to cultivate Kurdish friendship. The area in question was strategically important. If the Nazis were to break through the Caucasus range, a grave possibility in 1942, the Kurdish regions would have had to be crossed. On the other hand, any Soviet thrust to the Persian Gulf would lead through the Kermanshah-Khanaqin line, which also runs in the Kurdish territory. In both cases, if only for defensive purposes, it was in the

highest interest of the British to be on friendly terms with the local tribes. The British-controlled oil installations situated in the Kurdish areas of Iraq and Iran afforded an additional reason. Both the security of these installations and the success of labor-management relations depended on the success of the British tribal policy.

What has been said about the British cultivating friendship with the Kurds may be applied also to the British policy among other tribes of Iran. The stability of the tribes in contrast to the weakness of the Iranian government determined British policy in this respect. In Teheran governments might change, undergo strange convulsions, and become subject to foreign pressures occasionally inimical to the